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Security Council
Fifty-eighth year

Letter dated 6 November 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the report of the 20th ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, which was held from 27 to 31 October 2003 in Malabo, Republic of Equatorial Guinea (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 74 (b), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Lino Sima Ekua **Avomo**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 6 November 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Equatorial Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

UNITED NATIONS STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SECURITY QUESTIONS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

REPORT OF THE 20TH MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SECURITY QUESTIONS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

MALABO, EQUATORIAL GUINEA
27-31 October 2003

Introduction

The twentieth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa was held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, from 27 to 31 October 2003.

All member States, with the exception of Angola, took part in the meeting: Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, and Sao Tome and Principe.

Representatives of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and of the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy also participated in the work.

The opening ceremony featured:

- A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, read by the Representative of the Secretary-General in the Central African Republic, General Lamine Cissé;
- A message from the Secretary-General of ECCAS, read by Ambassador Nelson M. Cosme, Deputy Secretary-General of ECCAS responsible for human integration, peace, security and stability;
- The speech of the current Chairman of the Advisory Committee, H.E. Mr. Abdou Karim Meckassoua, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and la Francophonie of the Central African Republic.

The inaugural speech was delivered by H.E. Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, Head of State and Founding President of the Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea, and the closing speech was delivered by H.E. Mr. Pastor Micha Ondo Bile, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Equatorial Guinea, personal representative of the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Conduct of work

I. Adoption of the agenda

The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda of the twentieth ministerial meeting.
2. Report of the outgoing Bureau.
3. Election of the new Bureau.
4. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa.
5. Intergovernmental cooperation in security matters in Central Africa.
6. Evaluation of the implementation of the previous decisions and recommendations of the Advisory Committee:

(a) Consideration of the implementation of the recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Proliferation of and Illicit Traffic in Small Arms and Light Weapons in Central Africa;

(b) Consideration of the implementation of the recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Question of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Central Africa;

(c) Consideration of the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Protection of Women and Children in Armed Conflicts in Central Africa;

(d) Consideration of the implementation of the Programme of Priority Activities of Central Africa for the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted by the subregional seminar on the implementation in Central Africa of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

7. Activities of the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa.

8. Activities of the ECCAS Secretariat:

(a) Establishment of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX);

(b) The "Biyongho-2003" military peacekeeping exercise;

(c) Study on the Early-Warning Mechanism for Central Africa (MARAC);

(d) Establishment of a subregional parliament;

(e) Cooperation between the United Nations and ECCAS.

9. Consideration and adoption of the draft resolution on the Committee's activities.

10. Adoption of the Committee's programme of work for the period 2003-2004.

11. Other matters:

(a) Discussion of the functioning of the Committee;

(b) Date and place of twenty-first ministerial meeting.

12. Adoption of the report of the twentieth ministerial meeting.

II. Report of the outgoing Bureau

The Committee took note of the report of the outgoing Bureau presented by its President, H.E. Mr. Abdou Karim Meckassoua, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and la Francophonie of the Central African Republic.

The Committee praised the energetic and effective way in which the Bureau had discharged the mandates entrusted to it at the nineteenth ministerial meeting, particularly the organization of the "Biyongho-2003" military peacekeeping exercise, the entry into force of the Protocol on COPAX and the organization of the twentieth ministerial meeting.

III. Election of the new Bureau

The Committee proceeded to elect its new Bureau, composed as follows:

- President: Republic of Equatorial Guinea
- First Vice-President: Congo
- Second Vice-President: Sao Tome and Principe
- Rapporteur: Rwanda

IV. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in Central Africa

Angola

The Committee noted with satisfaction the positive development of the situation in Angola. It commended the efforts of the Government to consolidate the democratic process, especially the establishment of a constitutional commission responsible for organizing consultations on the adoption of a new Constitution prior to the holding of elections.

The Committee nevertheless expressed its concern regarding the situation relating to the resettlement of refugees and displaced persons and the reinsertion into civil society of ex-combatants and their families.

Burundi

The Committee welcomed the progress made in the development of the situation in Burundi, particularly:

- The signing on 8 October 2003 of the Pretoria Protocol on Political, Defence and Security Power Sharing in Burundi between the Transitional Government of Burundi and the National Council for the Defence of Democracy — Forces for Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD);
- The deployment of the African peacekeeping force, with Ethiopian, South African and Mozambican contingents stationed in Bujumbura.

The Committee nevertheless remained deeply concerned about the deterioration in the living conditions of the population of Burundi and the persistent insecurity there due to the continuing attacks on civilian populations and economic infrastructures by armed groups opposed to the peace process.

The Committee encouraged the Transitional Government of Burundi to pursue its efforts to keep the population and opinion leaders informed and aware of the basis and need for the Pretoria Protocol.

It also launched an appeal:

- To the parties to the conflict to respect the commitments undertaken by virtue of having signed the various peace accords;

- To the Palipehutu/FNL rebel movement opposed to the peace process to become involved with it;

- For implementation by the countries concerned of the Declaration of Principles on Good-Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, signed in New York on 25 September 2003;

- To the international community to give practical expression to the financial pledges made at donors' conferences held in Paris and Geneva.

Cameroon

The Committee welcomed the climate of peace and stability reigning in Cameroon.

It welcomed the continued efforts of the Government of Cameroon in:

- The fight against urban crime, the phenomenon of roadblocks and organized crime;

- Implementation of the national programme of good governance;

- The anti-corruption campaign.

The Committee welcomed the ongoing work of the Tripartite Mixed Commission created by the United Nations to ensure observance and implementation of the ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of 10 October 2002 in the Bakassi case.

Central African Republic

The Committee welcomed the positive development of the political situation in the Central African Republic and in particular:

- The normal functioning of the transitional institutions;

- The positive outcome, on 27 October 2003, of the National Dialogue involving numerous Heads of State or their representatives, which was a major turning-point in the country's socio-political life.

The Committee welcomed the electoral timetable recommended by the National Dialogue and called on the international community to enhance its support for the implementation of all the conclusions of that forum.

It did, however, express its concern about the generally precarious security situation, and noted with satisfaction the joint efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC) Force and the logistic support provided by the French Army to restore security throughout the territory.

It welcomed the special attention given by member States to the situation in the Central African Republic and their determination to contribute to consolidation of the ongoing peace process.

Republic of the Congo

The Committee welcomed the climate of peace and calm prevailing in the Congo since the previous meeting.

It noted with satisfaction:

- The destruction of 3,350 anti-personnel mines in September 2003;
- The training of 1,500 officers by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in international humanitarian law;
- The establishment of a committee responsible for preparing national and local elections in the department of Pool;
- The continued disarmament, demobilization and reinsertion of ex-combatants.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Committee welcomed the progress made in the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially:

- The effective establishment of transitional institutions, i.e. Government, Parliament and grass-roots institutions;
- The liberalization of political activities;
- The establishment of a general staff headquarters for the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the appointment of commanders of military regions;
- The signature in New York, on 25 September 2003, of the Declaration of Principles on Good-Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.

However, it expressed its grave concern regarding the persistent hotbeds of tension and insecurity in some regions of the country, especially:

- Inter-ethnic conflicts in Ituri resulting in massacres of the civilian population;
- Insecurity in North and South Kivu due to the sporadic resumption of hostilities between armed groups.

The Committee also welcomed the combined efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the international community to put an end to the situation of insecurity, particularly by:

- Creating an interim emergency multinational force as part of operation "Artemis" in Bunia;
- Relaunching the activities of the Ituri Pacification Commission;
- Securing the city of Kinshasa with joint patrols of the national police, the armed forces and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

The Committee noted with satisfaction that, in accordance with the request made at the nineteenth ministerial meeting, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, the mandate of MONUC had been adjusted so as to enable it to

resort to armed force to restore peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in the Ituri region.

It also welcomed the recommendation made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in presenting his report to the General Assembly that the international community should implement a special transition programme, an emergency programme to rebuild the country's public infrastructure and an emergency humanitarian, social and cultural aid programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to deal with the humanitarian situation there.

Gabon

The Committee was pleased to note the climate of peace and political stability prevailing in Gabon.

It noted the amendments made to the country's Constitution, which deleted earlier provisions limiting the President of the Republic to two terms in office.

The Committee welcomed the efforts of the Gabonese Republic in its campaign against crime and organized crime, especially the joint "NGUENE" operations involving the defence forces and security units.

Equatorial Guinea

The Committee welcomed the climate of peace and stability prevailing in Equatorial Guinea.

It welcomed the formation of the Government of National Unity with the participation of certain opposition leaders who had been candidates in the presidential election of 15 December 2002.

The Committee noted with satisfaction the agreement signed on 29 August 2003 between the Government and the country's 13 political parties to improve the democratic opposition's representation in Parliament and the confirmation that legislative elections would be held in Equatorial Guinea in the first half of 2004.

Rwanda

The Committee welcomed the climate of peace and stability prevailing in Rwanda.

It was particularly pleased to note the adoption following a referendum of a new Constitution and the organization of presidential and legislative elections in a calm and secure manner.

The Committee noted with satisfaction the large numbers of women in the decision-making bodies, in which the new Constitution reserves for them at least 30 per cent of the seats.

The Committee welcomed the release of more than 40,000 prisoners who had pleaded guilty, out of a total of 120,000 being held for the crime of genocide.

It welcomed the efforts of the Rwandan Government to foster unity and reconciliation, to promote human rights and justice, to guarantee the country's security and sovereignty, and to combat HIV/AIDS.

The Committee noted Rwanda's satisfaction with those countries that had facilitated the extradition of persons suspected of committing genocide to appear before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), and urges member countries to continue in that vein.

The Committee welcomed the signature in New York, on 25 September 2003, of the Declaration of Principles on Good-Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.

Sao Tome and Principe

The Committee welcomed with satisfaction the peaceful settlement, by the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding on 23 July 2003, of the political crisis resulting from the coup carried out by elements of the armed forces and of the former Buffalo Battalion on 16 July 2003.

It noted with interest the firm condemnation of the coup by the international community and the call for constitutional order to be respected, and welcomed the decisive role played in the peaceful settlement of the crisis by ECCAS.

The Committee noted the gratitude expressed by the delegation of Sao Tome and Principe to the international community and especially to ECCAS for the decisive role it had played in resolving the crisis.

The Committee also welcomed the efforts made by the presidency of the Commission of Guarantee and Follow-up of the Memorandum of Understanding, and acknowledged the implementation of the Memorandum by the Government of Sao Tome and Principe.

Chad

The Committee welcomed the efforts of the Government of Chad to introduce and strengthen the rule of law in that country, notably by:

- Holding States General of Justice, culminating in the adoption of a programme which it pledged to implement;
- Implementing a National Good Governance Strategy, a National Poverty Reduction Strategy and the law on transparency in the management of revenue from the oil reserves starting to be exploited at the beginning of October 2003;
- Organizing local elections which were to be held shortly and would put the finishing touches to the country's decentralization process.

The Committee took note of the consolidation of relations between Chad and the Central African Republic, reflected in the free movement of people between the two countries and the gradual return of refugees from the Central African Republic to their own country.

The Committee also welcomed Chad's contribution to the process of restoring peace to the Sudanese region of Darfur, which bordered Chad.

On the subject of internal security, the Committee noted the Government's efforts to deal with the disturbing phenomenon of armed hold-ups, particularly in the city of N'djamena and other urban centres.

V. Intergovernmental cooperation in security matters in Central Africa

The Committee took note with satisfaction of the intensification of actions and initiatives of the member States of ECCAS within the framework of cooperation in security matters, aimed at lessening tensions, combating insecurity in the border areas, and facilitating exchanges between the various national structures dealing with these questions.

In view of the trans-border nature of most of the security problems in the subregion and the need to respond to those problems in a joint and concerted manner, the Committee again strongly recommended continued cooperation and dialogue among the security forces of the Central African countries, particularly within the framework of periodic meetings and the organization of joint operations.

The Committee welcomed, in that connection:

- The signature on 25 September 2003 in New York of a Declaration of Principles on Good-Neighbourly Relations and Cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda;
- The workshop held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 8 to 12 September 2003 to train senior officers of the armed forces and the security forces in the control of light weapons in Central Africa, organized by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNRCPDA) in collaboration with the Government of Cameroon and the Institute of International Relations of Cameroon (IRIC);
- The organization of the "Biyongho-2003" military peacekeeping exercise in Gabon from 21 to 28 July 2003;
- The meeting of Chiefs of Staff of the countries of Central Africa, held in Brazzaville, Congo, on 28 and 29 October 2003;
- The establishment of Tripartite Mixed Commissions to deal with the problem of refugees and displaced persons in many member countries;
- The summit meetings of countries of Central Africa organized bilaterally and multilaterally on questions of security;
- The inauguration on 10 October 2003 of the Chad-Cameroon pipeline enabling Chad's oil production to be exported.

The Committee once again expressed its deep concern at the persistence of organized crime and insecurity in the countries of the subregion, and particularly at the phenomenon of roadblocks.

Finally, the Committee welcomed the ratification by eight of the eleven member States of the Protocol on COPAX. It recommended that member States which had ratified the Protocol should deposit their instruments of ratification with the depositary State, and that States which had not yet done so should proceed to ratification before the end of 2003.

VI. Evaluation of the implementation of the previous decisions and recommendations of the Advisory Committee

(a) Consideration of the implementation of the recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Proliferation of and Illicit Traffic in Small Arms and Light Weapons in Central Africa

The Committee noted with interest the information transmitted by the member countries on the implementation of the recommendations of the Subregional Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons in Central Africa, held in N'djamena, Chad, from 27 to 30 October 1999.

The Committee welcomed the establishment in virtually all the States of national structures to combat the proliferation of and illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, as well as the activities to increase awareness among the civilian population.

The Committee noted with satisfaction the consideration being given in the various member States to aligning legislative and statutory procedures governing the arms sector at national level. It welcomed the increased participation of member States in international meetings on combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Finally, the Committee underlined the various obstacles encountered by member States in implementing the recommendations of the Conference, particularly those related to the paucity of technical and financial resources, and called on the international community to increase its support to the subregion.

(b) Consideration of the implementation of the recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Question of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Central Africa

The Committee noted with interest the information transmitted by the member States concerning the implementation of the recommendations of this Conference, which was held in Bujumbura, Burundi, in August 2000.

In particular, it welcomed the efforts made by several Governments in the subregion to encourage their refugee nationals in neighbouring countries to return home and the concerted management of the question of refugees and displaced persons by several countries.

It appealed to the international community, and in particular the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to provide increased assistance to countries of the subregion facing problems arising from the influx of refugees and displaced persons.

(c) Consideration of the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Subregional Conference on the Protection of Women and Children in Armed Conflict in Central Africa

The Committee took note with interest of the information transmitted by member States concerning the implementation of the recommendations of this Conference, which was held in Kinshasa in November 2001.

It welcomed the political and legal measures taken by certain member States to guarantee the representation of women on decision-making bodies and their increased involvement in the peace process.

The Committee regarded in a positive light the training programmes in international humanitarian law provided by some member States for the armed forces and encouraged other States to adopt similar programmes.

Finally, it called on the international community to support the efforts made by the member States to demobilize and reintegrate child soldiers.

(d) Consideration of the implementation of the Programme of Priority Activities of Central Africa for the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted by the subregional seminar on the implementation in Central Africa of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

The Committee took note of the information transmitted by the member States and welcomed the establishment, in accordance with the Brazzaville timetable, of national commissions and structures to coordinate policies aimed at fighting the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa.

The Committee invites the ECCAS secretariat to submit a programme of action to its decision-making bodies on the harmonization of legislative procedures on the control of small arms and light weapons.

VII. Activities of the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa

The Committee took note with satisfaction of the activities undertaken by the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa since the nineteenth ministerial meeting of the Committee, especially:

- The organization, in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, from 20 to 22 May 2003, of the seminar on the topic "Media, Human Rights and Democracy";
- The organization, in N'djamena, Chad, from 22 to 24 July 2003, of the seminar on the topic "The role of civil society in Central Africa in the promotion and protection of the human rights of vulnerable groups";
- Its continuing programme of training courses in human rights and the management of democratic elections for citizens of member States, now receiving its ninth and tenth intakes.

The Committee took note of the programme of activities of the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa and recommended that it should enhance its relations of cooperation with ECCAS.

The Committee also called on member States to support the Subregional Centre's activities with extrabudgetary contributions.

VIII. Activities of the ECCAS secretariat

(a) Establishment of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX)

The Committee noted with satisfaction the report of the ECCAS secretariat on the ratification by eight of the eleven ECCAS member countries of the Protocol on COPAX, the Mutual Assistance Pact and the Non-Aggression Pact.

The Committee congratulated the ECCAS secretariat on its efforts to secure ratification of the Protocol on COPAX by member States.

It hopes that, now that the legal obstacle has been removed, ECCAS will be able to assume its responsibilities in the promotion of peace and security in the subregion.

(b) The "Biyongho-2003" military peacekeeping exercise

The Committee noted with satisfaction the organization and successful conduct of the "Biyongho-2003" military peacekeeping exercise in Franceville, Gabon, from 21 to 28 July 2003, with the participation of Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.

The Committee welcomed the contributions made to the exercise by member States, especially Cameroon and Gabon, which had made additional contributions, and expressed its gratitude to the Government of France for its logistical support and to the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, Canada, for its support in providing peacekeeping training to officers participating in the exercise.

(c) Study on the Early-Warning Mechanism for Central Africa (MARAC)

The Committee welcomed with interest the launching of the study on the Early-Warning Mechanism for Central Africa (MARAC) and expressed its gratitude to the European Union for its financial support of the study.

It noted the deadlines for the study: the preliminary report available to member States by 12 November 2003 and the final report by the end of December 2003.

However, the Committee invited the ECCAS secretariat and member States to ensure that the concerns and realities of the subregion were taken into account in the study.

(d) Establishment of a subregional parliament

The Committee took note of the current process whereby all member States were to sign the Protocol establishing the Network of Central African Parliamentarians (REPAC) as a prelude to a subregional parliament. The Protocol would then be submitted to member States for ratification before entering into force.

The Committee invited Equatorial Guinea, as the REPAC host country, to continue its efforts to construct a headquarters building for the subregional parliament.

(e) Cooperation between the United Nations and ECCAS

The Committee noted with satisfaction the strengthening of relations between the United Nations and ECCAS since the signature of the Memorandum of Cooperation between the two organizations.

It welcomed the sending of a United Nations multidisciplinary mission, which was in Central Africa from 8 to 22 June 2003, in accordance with the statement of the President of the Security Council of 31 October 2002, in order to promote a global, integrated, resolute and concerted approach to the problems of peace, security and development in Central Africa.

The Committee welcomed the initiative of the mission and reiterated the wish that its outcomes should include the establishment of a subregional bureau of the United Nations to support the efforts of all its agencies and representatives, as well as those of ECCAS, regarding peace and security in the subregion.

The Committee took note of the fact that from 7 to 16 June 2003 a Security Council mission had visited the Great Lakes region to make the various parties aware of the need to advance the peace process.

The Committee welcomed the organization by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, in collaboration with ECCAS, of a meeting of experts in Lomé, Togo, in June 2003, to approve and adopt a training programme for trainers in controlling small arms and light weapons, followed by a workshop to train senior officers of the armed forces and the security services in the control of small arms in Central Africa, which was organized by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, in collaboration with ECCAS, the Government of Cameroon and the Institute of International Relations of Cameroon (IRIC), and held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 8 to 12 September 2003.

The Committee noted with interest the organization by the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, jointly with ECCAS and at a date to be agreed with the Gabonese authorities, of a seminar on increased participation by civil society in decision-making.

The Committee recommended that ECCAS should continue its contacts with the United Nations with the objective of participation by the Community's member States in the preparation and running of the international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region.

IX. Consideration and adoption of the draft resolution on the Committee's activities

The Committee considered and adopted the draft resolution, which will be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, and requested member States to instruct their Missions in New York to support the draft resolution.

X. Adoption of the Committee's programme of work for the period 2003-2004

The Committee considered and adopted the programme of work for the period 2003-2004, as follows:

- Organization of the twenty-first and twenty-second ministerial meetings;
- Organization of a seminar on the topic "Women and Disarmament" (date and place to be determined);
- Organization of a seminar on the topic "Promotion of the role of civil society in combating the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (date and place to be determined).

XI. Other matters

(a) Discussion of the functioning of the Committee

The Committee decided to engage in a discussion, at the twenty-first ministerial meeting, of the way in which the Committee functions.

(b) Date and place of twenty-first ministerial meeting

The Committee decided that the twenty-first ministerial meeting would be held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in March-April 2004.

Lastly, the participants welcomed the favourable climate that had prevailed throughout their deliberations and expressed their appreciation to H.E. Mr. Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, Head of State and Founding President of the Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea, and to the Government and people of Equatorial Guinea for the warm welcome and fraternal attentions paid to them during their stay in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Malabo, 31 October 2003